

VERTIGO

WILLINGHAM
BUCKINGHAM
LEIALOHA
GREEN

F A B
L E S

• 91 •

WITCHES

Feb '10

suggested for
mature readers
vertigo.comics.com

5 of 5



Bill Willingham:
writer/creator
Mark Buckingham:
penciller
Steve Leialo'a:
inker, except—
Daniel Green:
inker p. 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 15-20
Lee Loughridge:
colors
Todd Klein: letters
Joao Ruas: cover
Angela Rufino:
associate editor
Shelly Bond: editor

GEPPETTO

CHAPTER FIVE OF WITCHES





POPS!

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? I'VE BEEN TURNING THE FARM UPSIDE DOWN LOOKING FOR YOU!

UHM... WHO ARE YOUR NEW FRIENDS, GEPPETTO?

SATURATED IN POWER.

DRYADS.

PRINCE ASPEN AND HIS SISTER PRINCESS ALDER ARE MY BODYGUARDS, ASSIGNED TO ME BY MY NEW ALLY, THE ONLY GREAT MAGICAL POWER NATIVE TO THIS GROSSLY UNMAGICAL WORLD.

A GROUP OF ANIMAL FABLES, POSSIBLY ACTING ON THE SECRET ORDERS OF THE FARM'S CRIMINAL LEADERSHIP, ATTEMPTED TO ASSASSINATE ME.

WHEN THAT FAILED THEY BURIED ME ALIVE IN A DEEP HOLE, WHERE I WAS SUPPOSED TO DISAPPEAR FOR ALL TIME. THAT'S WHERE I'VE BEEN, SON.

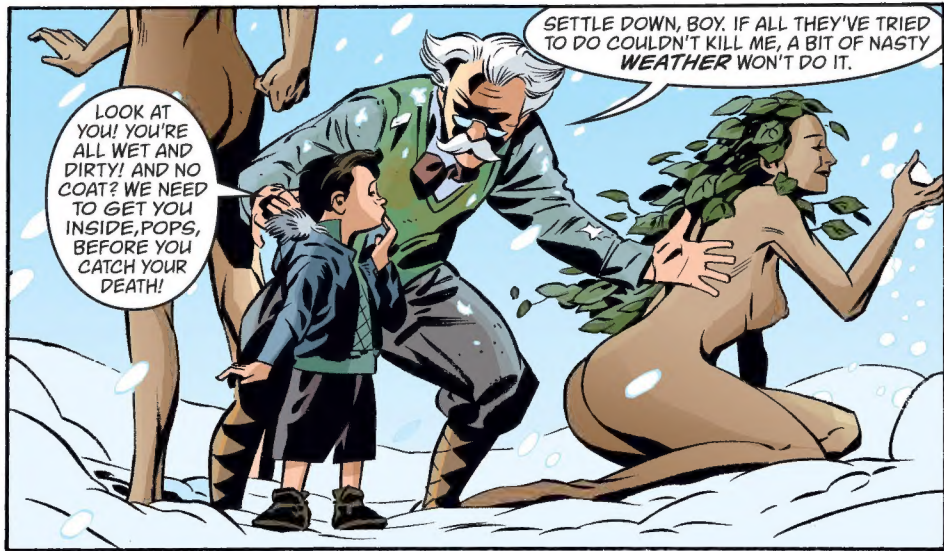
BUT I CHOOSE TO FORGET MY JUST VENGEANCE AGAINST ALL OF YOU, CONSIDERING THE GRAVE DANGERS THAT FACE US.

LOOK, BROTHER! SNOWFALL!

WE'VE NEVER BEEN AWAKE TO SEE THE SNOW BEFORE!

IT TICKLES!

GRANDFATHER HAS INTERRUPTED OUR NATURAL CYCLE. IMAGINE! GREEN LEAVES IN WINTER. IT'S TRULY AN AGE OF WONDERS, SISTER.



LOOK AT YOU! YOU'RE ALL WET AND DIRTY! AND NO COAT? WE NEED TO GET YOU INSIDE, POPS, BEFORE YOU CATCH YOUR DEATH!

SETTLE DOWN, BOY. IF ALL THEY'VE TRIED TO DO COULDN'T KILL ME, A BIT OF NASTY WEATHER WON'T DO IT.



IS IT TRUE, KING COLE? DID YOU TRY TO KILL MY DAD? WE HAD A DEAL!

I DIDN'T... WE NEVER...

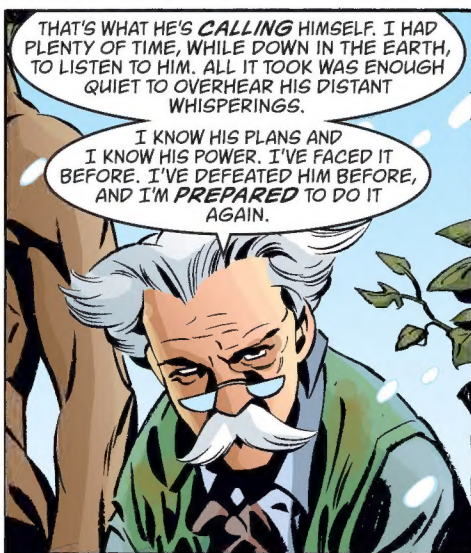
WE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH GEPPETTO'S DISAPPEARANCE, PINOCCHIO. WORD OF HONOR.



WHAT HONOR MIGHT SUCH AS YOU HAVE? BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER. WE'VE OTHER ISSUES OF IMPORT TO CONCERN US. MISTER DARK OCCUPIES OUR HOME IN NEW YORK TOWN.

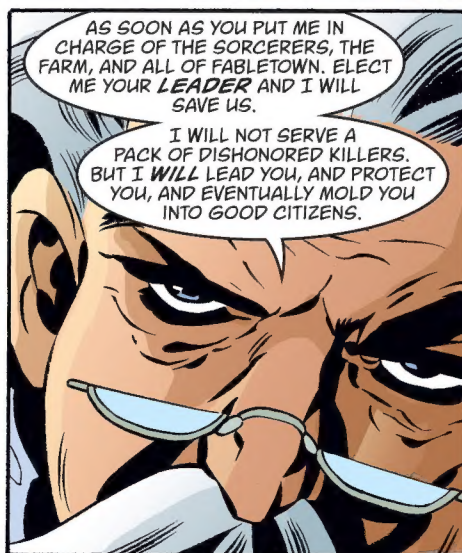
IT'S NEW YORK CITY, POPS.

MISTER DARK?



THAT'S WHAT HE'S CALLING HIMSELF. I HAD PLENTY OF TIME, WHILE DOWN IN THE EARTH, TO LISTEN TO HIM. ALL IT TOOK WAS ENOUGH QUIET TO OVERHEAR HIS DISTANT WHISPERINGS.

I KNOW HIS PLANS AND I KNOW HIS POWER. I'VE FACED IT BEFORE. I'VE DEFEATED HIM BEFORE, AND I'M PREPARED TO DO IT AGAIN.



AS SOON AS YOU PUT ME IN CHARGE OF THE SORCERERS, THE FARM, AND ALL OF FABLETOWN. ELECT ME YOUR LEADER AND I WILL SAVE US.

I WILL NOT SERVE A PACK OF DISHONORED KILLERS. BUT I WILL LEAD YOU, AND PROTECT YOU, AND EVENTUALLY MOLD YOU INTO GOOD CITIZENS.



ELSE-WHERE...

IT'S NO USE, FRANKIE!

DON'T SAY THAT, BUFKIN. YOU'LL GET THE HANG OF IT.



I CAN'T USE THE VORPAL BLADE!

"CAN'T" ISN'T PART OF A HERO'S VOCABULARY.

LEADERS ARE MADE OF "CAN DO."



BUT IT'S TOO BIG FOR ME!

THOUGH YOU'RE SMALL IN STATURE, YOU'RE BIG IN SPIRIT. THAT HAS TO COUNT FOR SOMETHING. TRUST ME. I'M A GENIUS.



EVERY TIME I TRY TO SWING IT, I LOSE CONTROL!

TRY TO SUMMON YOUR INNER BEOWULF. BE BIGGER THAN THE SWORD.



I DON'T THINK YOUR POP-PSYCHOLOGY HOODOO IS GOING TO OVERCOME ACTUAL PHYSICS WHEN--

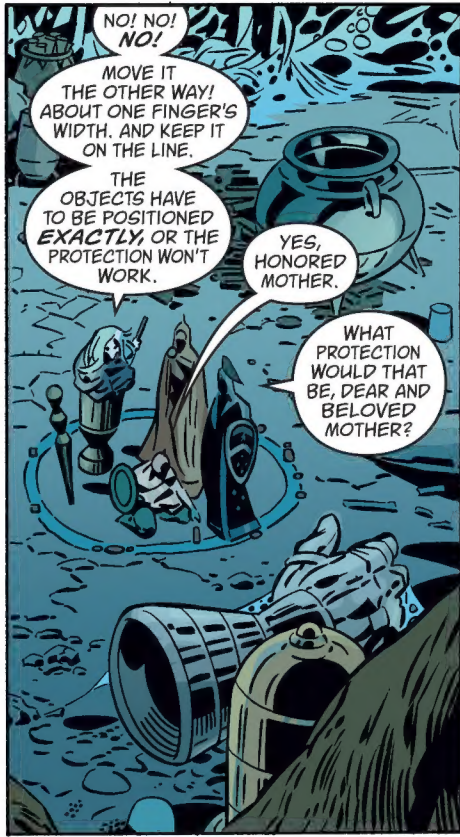
YOW!

GOOD SWING! GOOD CHOP! NOW YOU'RE GETTING THE HANG OF IT!

YIKES!

LOOK OUT!

HEY!



NO! NO!
NO!

MOVE IT
THE OTHER WAY!
ABOUT ONE FINGER'S
WIDTH, AND KEEP IT
ON THE LINE.

THE
OBJECTS HAVE
TO BE POSITIONED
EXACTLY, OR THE
PROTECTION WON'T
WORK.

YES,
HONORED
MOTHER.

WHAT
PROTECTION
WOULD THAT
BE, DEAR AND
BELOVED
MOTHER?



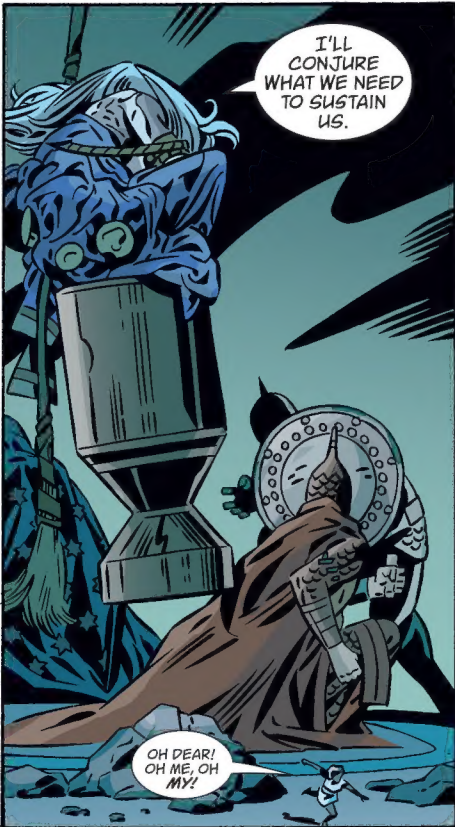
I'M TIRED OF **HUNTING**
FOR THIS BUFKIN CREATURE. AND
WHY SHOULD I CHASE AFTER
HIM LIKE A MAIDEN AFTER HER
SWEETHEART, WHEN I CAN
KILL HIM FROM
HERE?

I'M GOING
TO DO A MAJOR
WORKING.



I'LL CONJURE MY DARK MIST THAT WILL
SPREAD OUT AND KILL **EVERYTHING** IN
THIS CURSED PLACE, EXCEPT FOR THOSE
OF US WITHIN THIS CIRCLE.

WON'T
THAT DEPRIVE
US OF AUGHT TO
EAT, CHERISHED
MOTHER?



I'LL
CONJURE
WHAT WE NEED
TO SUSTAIN
US.

OH DEAR!
OH ME, OH
MY!



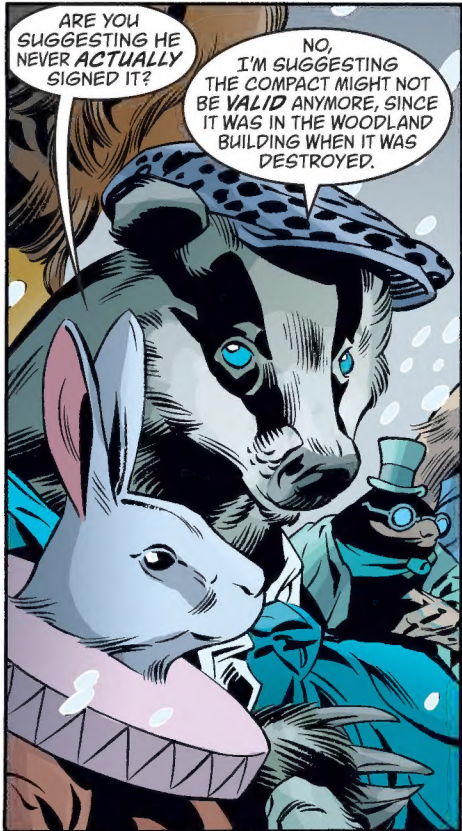


MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE FARM...

ELECT THE ADVERSARY TO LEAD US? IS HE INSANE?

WELL, TO BE FAIR, HE DID SIGN THE FABLETOWN COMPACT, WHICH FORGIVES ALL PAST DIRTY DEEDS.

WHAT FABLETOWN COMPACT WOULD THAT BE?



ARE YOU SUGGESTING HE NEVER ACTUALLY SIGNED IT?

NO, I'M SUGGESTING THE COMPACT MIGHT NOT BE VALID ANYMORE, SINCE IT WAS IN THE WOODLAND BUILDING WHEN IT WAS DESTROYED.



SO BASICALLY I'M SPECULATING: ARE GEPPETTO'S CRIMES STILL FORGIVEN, IF THE DOCUMENT PARDONING THEM NO LONGER EXISTS?

HMMM.
AN INTRIGUING PHILOSOPHICAL CONUNDRUM.



IT'S TIME, ROSE RED. THE CRISIS IS HERE.

BUT THEN, BY SIMILAR IMPLICATION, ALL OF OUR PAST CRIMES WOULD BE EQUALLY SUBJECT TO REEXAMINATION.

DO WE REALLY WANT TO OPEN THAT CAN OF WORMS?



NOW IS THE MOMENT. THEY NEED **YOU** TO STEP IN AND AVERT A TRAGEDY.

AND I NEED YOU TO PLEASE FOR ONCE **SHUT THE HELL UP!**



DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? IN A TIME OF CRISIS PEOPLE WILL TURN TO **ANYONE** WHO CAN OFFER THEM A HOPE OF SAFETY. THAT'S HOW DICTATORS TRADITIONALLY COME TO POWER.

AND DON'T **YOU** UNDERSTAND YOU DON'T ACTUALLY EXIST?



YOU AREN'T HERE TALKING TO ME. I'M IMAGINING YOU, JUST LIKE I IMAGINED **JACK HORNER** CAME TO VISIT ME YESTERDAY.



ACTUALLY, THAT WAS MANY DAYS AGO, AND--



YOU'RE A NIGHTMARE. A PHANTOM BIT OF BADLY DIGESTED PORK I HAD FOR LUNCH.

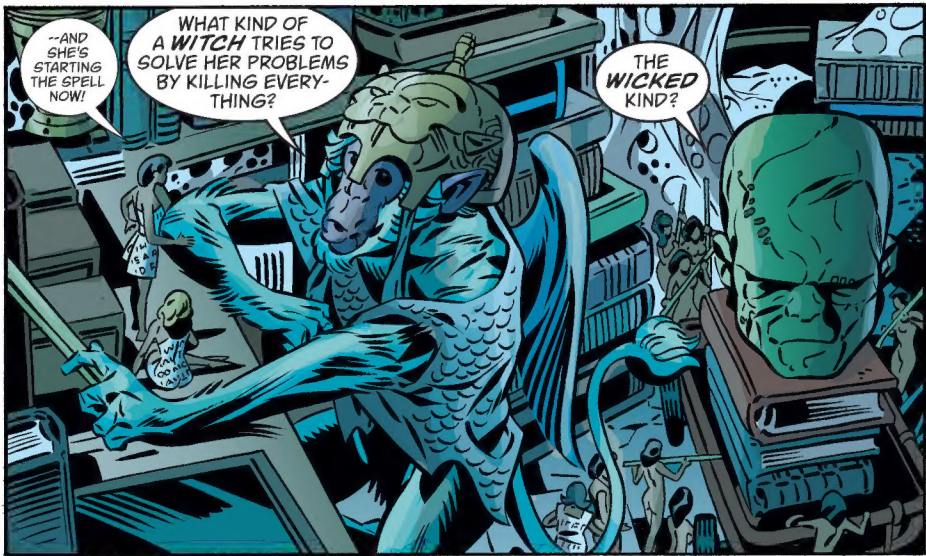
YOU AND JACK AND BLUE AND SINBAD AND EVERYONE ELSE ARE NOTHING MORE THAN **MANIFESTATIONS** OF MY GUILT AND EXHAUSTION.



IF YOU ONLY IMAGINED WHAT HAPPENED TO BLUE OR YOUR HUSBAND, WHAT DO YOU FEEL GUILTY ABOUT?

GET OUT!
GET OUT!
GET OUT!

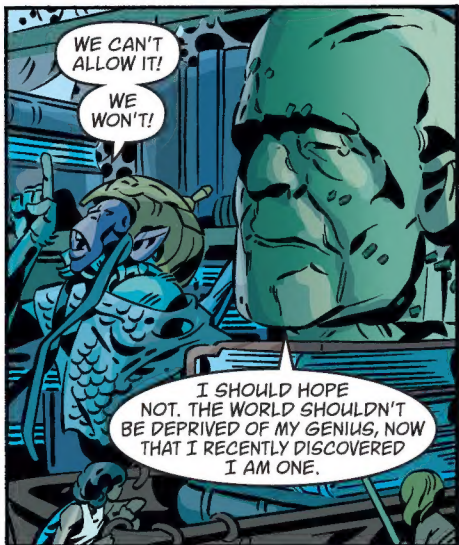
I'M BEGGING YOU, LEAVE ME ALONE.



--AND SHE'S STARTING THE SPELL NOW!

WHAT KIND OF A WITCH TRIES TO SOLVE HER PROBLEMS BY KILLING EVERY-THING?

THE WICKED KIND?



WE CAN'T ALLOW IT!
WE WON'T!

I SHOULD HOPE NOT. THE WORLD SHOULDN'T BE DEPRIVED OF MY GENIUS, NOW THAT I RECENTLY DISCOVERED I AM ONE.



SO, WHAT DO WE DO? MOST OF OUR SCHEMES ARE STILL BEING WORKED OUT.

TO HELL WITH PLANS AND SCHEMES! WE NEED TO ACT RIGHT AWAY!



AS POGENY'S TREATISE ON MAJOR WORLD PHILOSOPHIES (EXPANDED FOURTEENTH EDITION) TEACHES US: AT SOME POINT YOU HAVE TO STOP TRYING TO OUT-MANEUVER EVIL AND JUST STAND UP TO IT!



TO ARMS, BROTHERS AND SISTERS! ASSUME I JUST STIRRED YOU ALL WITH A THRILLING RENDITION OF BILLY SHAKESPEARE'S SAINT CRISPIN'S DAY SPEECH!

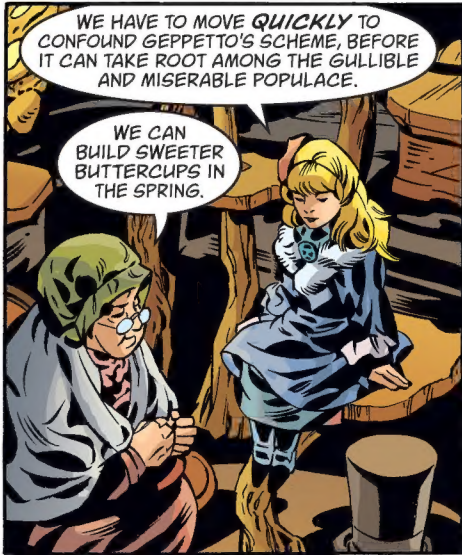
LAUNCH EVERY ATTACK THAT'S READY, ALL AT ONCE!





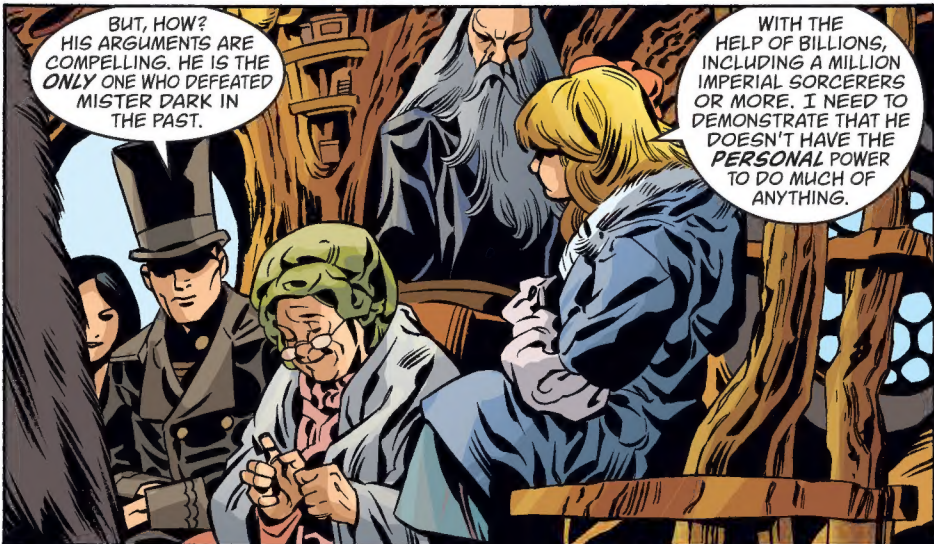
WE CAN'T HAVE THIS.

I AM NOT ABOUT TO HAVE MY NEW LEADERSHIP SUDDENLY OVERTURNED BY THIS GROTESQUE DEPOSED TYRANT--THIS UPSTART.



WE HAVE TO MOVE **QUICKLY** TO CONFOUND GEPPETTO'S SCHEME, BEFORE IT CAN TAKE ROOT AMONG THE GULLIBLE AND MISERABLE POPULACE.

WE CAN BUILD SWEETER BUTTERCUPS IN THE SPRING.



BUT, HOW? HIS ARGUMENTS ARE COMPELLING. HE IS THE **ONLY** ONE WHO DEFEATED MISTER DARK IN THE PAST.

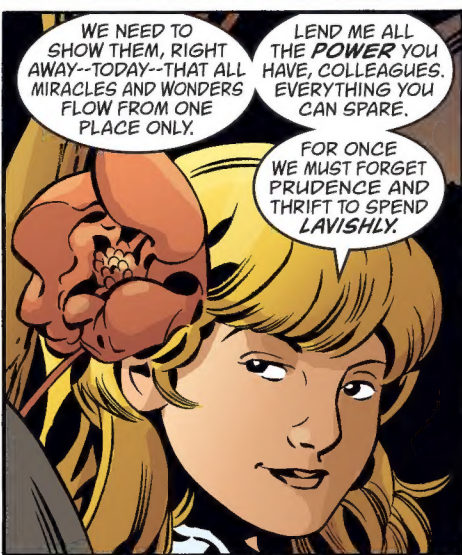
WITH THE HELP OF BILLIONS, INCLUDING A MILLION IMPERIAL SORCERERS OR MORE. I NEED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT HE **DOESN'T** HAVE THE **PERSONAL** POWER TO DO MUCH OF ANYTHING.



AND AGAIN I ASK **HOW?**

IT'S A DAY OF LAVENDER MIRACLES AND EGGS AND SAILING BOATS AND WONDERS.

BIRDIE, THAT'S IT! OH, YOU DOTTY OLD WITCH, I COULD **KISS** YOU!



WE NEED TO SHOW THEM, RIGHT AWAY--TODAY--THAT ALL MIRACLES AND WONDERS FLOW FROM ONE PLACE ONLY.

LEND ME ALL THE **POWER** YOU HAVE, COLLEAGUES. EVERYTHING YOU CAN SPARE.

FOR ONCE WE MUST FORGET PRUDENCE AND THRIFT TO SPEND **LAVISHLY**.

AT THAT MOMENT...

SPIRITS OF RUIN, POWERS OF WRATH,

HEED MY CALL. FOLLOW ITS PATH!

BRING YOUR MISTS OF HALTED BREATH!

PICKLEWEED, MESSAGE TO ALL MATCH FORCES: START YOUR ASSAULT NOW! NOW! NOW!

ROGER THAT, BIG COMMANDER HEAD!

CHOKING LIFE WITH DRIFTING DEATH.

MOLLYWART, ATTENTION TO ALL TREE FORCES: COMMENCE OPERATION DUMBO DROP. GO!

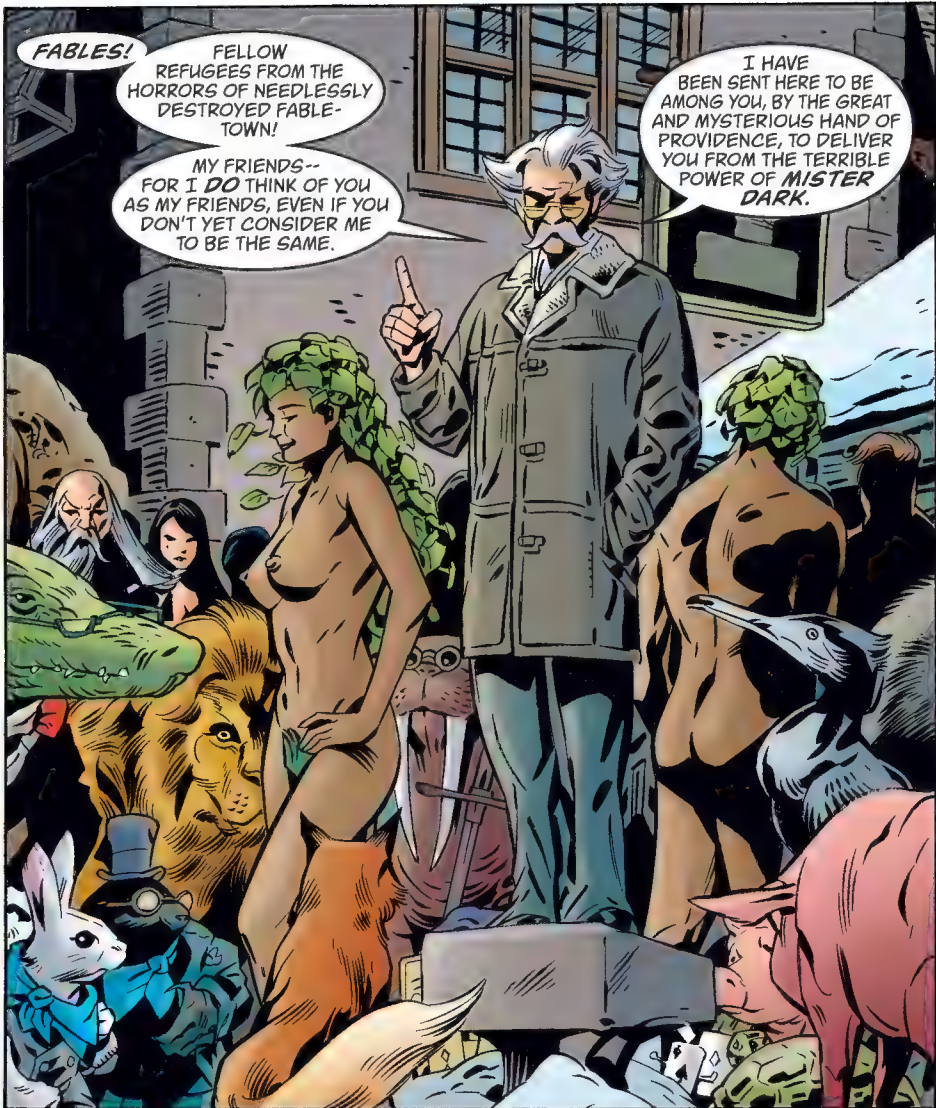
GOT IT! ON MY WAY!

GILDED LILY, IMMEDIATE MESSAGE TO MAJOR GAUNTLET: ACTIONS AT SOONEST OPPORTUNITY. DO YOU RECALL THE MAGIC PHRASE TO ACTIVATE HIM?

BETTER THAN I KNOW MY OWN BRAND NEW NAME, MON CAPITAINE!

FERN MOSS, MY COMPLIMENTS TO THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF: OPERATION WAR WAGON TO COMMENCE AT HIS DISCRETION.

I'M SO GONE, BOSS, IT'S LIKE I WAS NEVER HERE!



FABLES!

FELLOW REFUGEES FROM THE HORRORS OF NEEDLESSLY DESTROYED FABLE-TOWN!

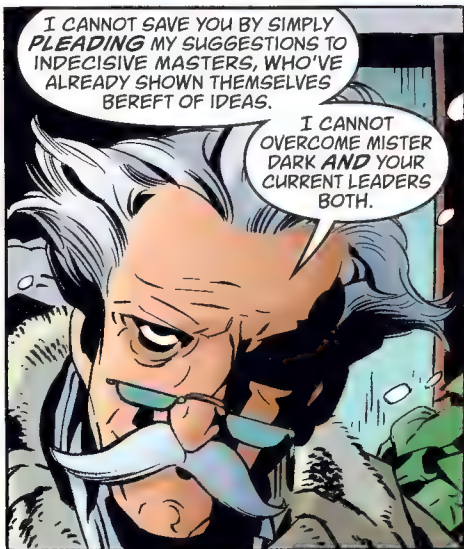
MY FRIENDS-- FOR I *DO* THINK OF YOU AS MY FRIENDS, EVEN IF YOU DON'T YET CONSIDER ME TO BE THE SAME.

I HAVE BEEN SENT HERE TO BE AMONG YOU, BY THE GREAT AND MYSTERIOUS HAND OF PROVIDENCE, TO DELIVER YOU FROM THE TERRIBLE POWER OF **MISTER DARK**.



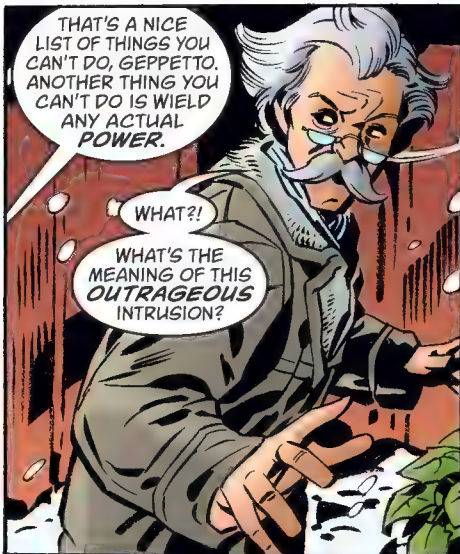
ASK ME TO LEAD YOU OUT OF THIS GRAVE DARKNESS AND I WILL!

BUT ONLY IF YOU ELECT ME TO **COMMAND** YOU! ONE CANNOT WIN LIBERTY WHILE LED BY A COMMITTEE, OR A DISCUSSION GROUP.



I CANNOT SAVE YOU BY SIMPLY **PLEADING** MY SUGGESTIONS TO INDECISIVE MASTERS, WHO'VE ALREADY SHOWN THEMSELVES BEREFT OF IDEAS.

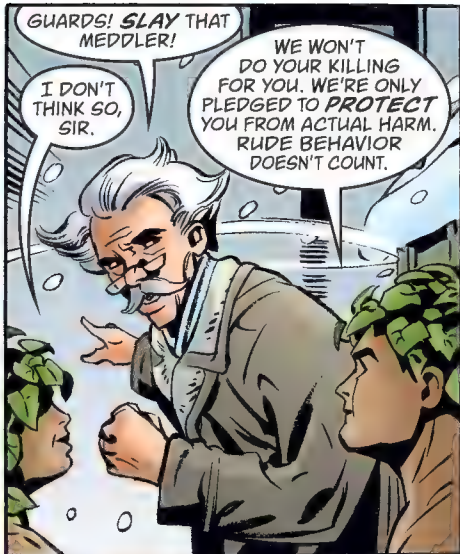
I CANNOT OVERCOME MISTER DARK **AND** YOUR CURRENT LEADERS BOTH.



THAT'S A NICE LIST OF THINGS YOU CAN'T DO, GEPPETTO. ANOTHER THING YOU CAN'T DO IS WIELD ANY ACTUAL POWER.

WHAT?!

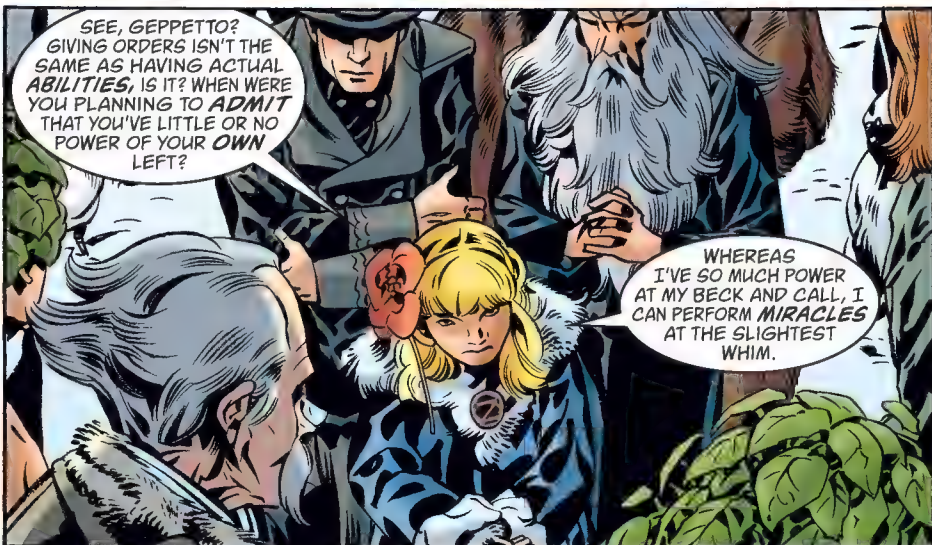
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS OUTRAGEOUS INTRUSION?



GUARDS! SLAY THAT MEDDLER!

I DON'T THINK SO, SIR.

WE WON'T DO YOUR KILLING FOR YOU. WE'RE ONLY PLEDGED TO PROTECT YOU FROM ACTUAL HARM. RUDE BEHAVIOR DOESN'T COUNT.



SEE, GEPPETTO? GIVING ORDERS ISN'T THE SAME AS HAVING ACTUAL ABILITIES, IS IT? WHEN WERE YOU PLANNING TO ADMIT THAT YOU'VE LITTLE OR NO POWER OF YOUR OWN LEFT?

WHEREAS I'VE SO MUCH POWER AT MY BECK AND CALL, I CAN PERFORM MIRACLES AT THE SLIGHTEST WHIM.



UNAUTHORIZED WITCH! PRACTITIONER OF LIES!

WANT TO TEST ME? FINE. WHAT SHALL I DO? OH, I KNOW. WHERE'S THE FOX NAMED REYNARD? STEP FORWARD IF YOU'RE HERE, PLEASE.



YOU CALLED, YOUNG LADY (WITH DISTURBINGLY OLD EYES)?

IT OCCURS TO ME THAT YOU WERE NEVER ADEQUATELY REWARDED FOR YOUR LOYALTY DURING PAST TROUBLES. SHALL WE RECTIFY THAT NOW?

I'VE HEARD THAT YOU ONCE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN BECOMING A MAN.

THEN LET IT BE SO.

HOW DO YOU FEEL, REYNARD, PRINCE OF LOYAL FRIENDS?

I--I DON'T KNOW. I FEEL ODD AND--

ACTUALLY, I FEEL WONDERFUL!

TAKE NOTE THAT THIS IS AN AUTHENTIC TRANSFORMATION, NOT JUST A CHEAP GLAMOUR. YOU ARE A MAN IN FULL NOW, BUT ALSO A FOX AGAIN, WHENEVER YOU WISH TO BE.

THE EXTRA EFFORT TO INCLUDE BOTH IN THE SPELL WAS NO EFFORT AT ALL.

MY WORD!

HE'S GORGEOUS!

AMAZING! A SINGLE GESTURE!

BUT IT TOOK WEEKS OF TREATMENTS FOR TOTENKINDER TO DO THE SAME THING FOR ME!



FAN OUT!
FAN OUT, MISTS
OF DOOM!

INTO EVERY
HALL AND EVERY
ROOM!



SEEP AND
SLITHER INTO
THE--

OW!

OW!

BONK!



MY RITUAL
IS INTERRUPTED
BY--WHAT?

A WOODEN
HEAD! IT FELL FROM
ABOVE!

LOOK
OUT, DEAR
MOTHER,
THERE'S--!



MORE!

OW!

PROTECT
YOURSELVES! WE'RE
UNDER ATTACK FROM
THE MOST SACRED
SUBJECTS OF THE
EMPIRE!

OW!

OW!

HOW--
DARE--
THEY?!

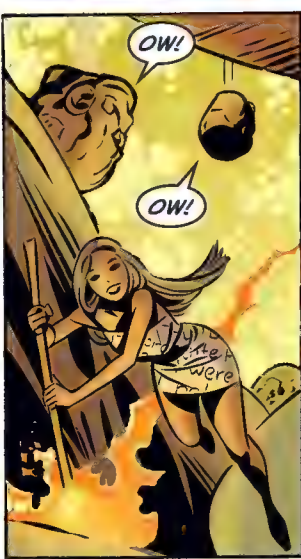
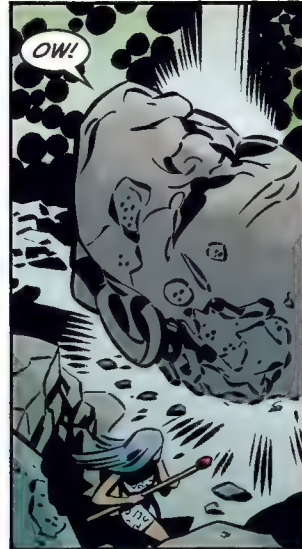
OW!

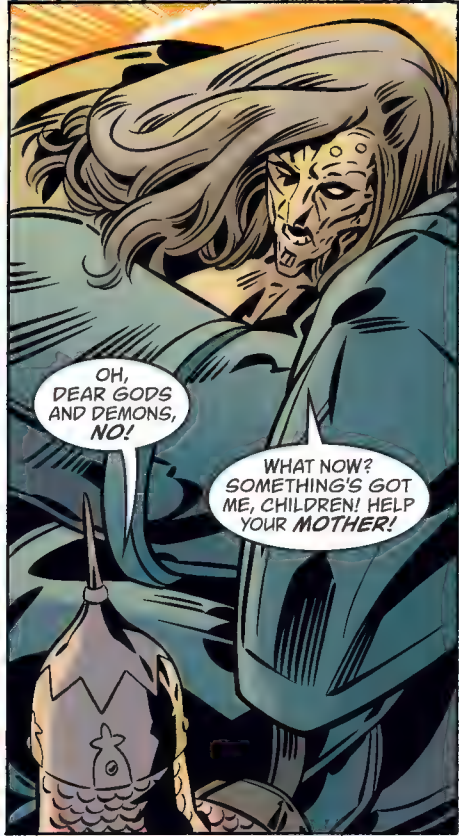
OW!

OW!

OW!











FIRE!

LOOK OUT, BUFKIN! YOUR WINGS ARE ON FIRE!

FIRE!

WATCH IT, BUDDY!

YOU'RE BURNING!

HUZZAH!

SNICKER SNACK!

AND JUST LIKE THAT, BROTHERS, WE'RE *UNDONE*, NOT BY A BANG, OR A WHIMPER, BUT BY AN IMBECILE COURT JESTER'S PRATFALL.



MOST OF AN HOUR LATER...

MY WINGS!
MY WONDERFUL WINGS
BURNED CLEAR TO THE
NUB!

POOR, BRAVE
BUFKIN, YOU WERE SO
HEROIC AND PAID A HIGH
PRICE FOR SAVING
US ALL.



TRUE SHE
IS, BUDDY. WE'RE
ALL PROUD OF
YOU.

YOU
KNOW, FRANKIE,
NOT TO PICK NITS
IN THE FLUSH OF
VICTORY, BUT YOU
GOT THE QUOTE
WRONG BACK
THERE.

IT'S NOT
"ONCE MORE UNTO
THE BEAKS."



THE CORRECT
LINE IS, "ONCE MORE
UNTO THE BREACH."

REALLY?
THAT SEEMS TO
MAKE MORE
SENSE.

BUT I ALWAYS
THOUGHT IT MEANT,
Y'KNOW, ATTACKING
KILLER BIRDS OR
SOMETHING.



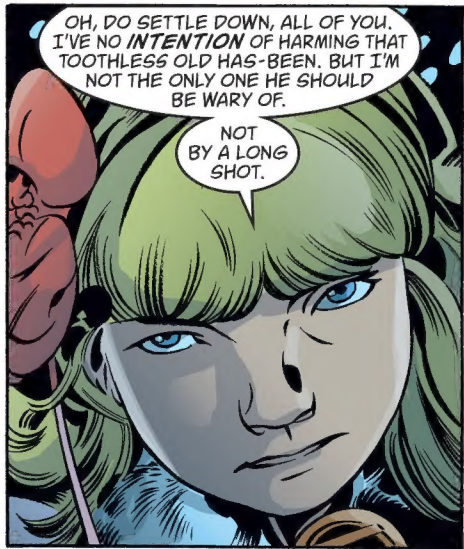
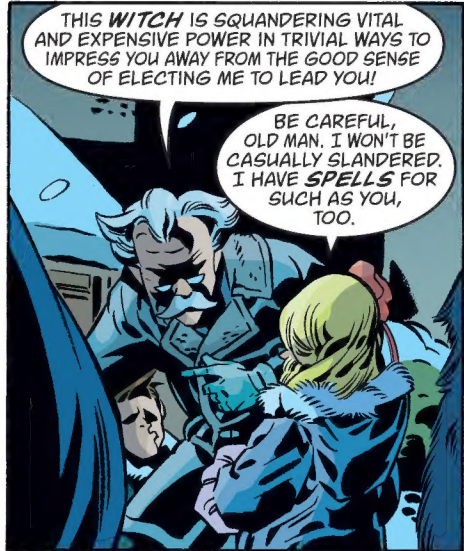
SO, DO YOU THINK
THE WITCH IS KILLED FOR
GOOD? THEY HAVE THE WORST
WAYS OF COMING BACK
SOMETIMES.

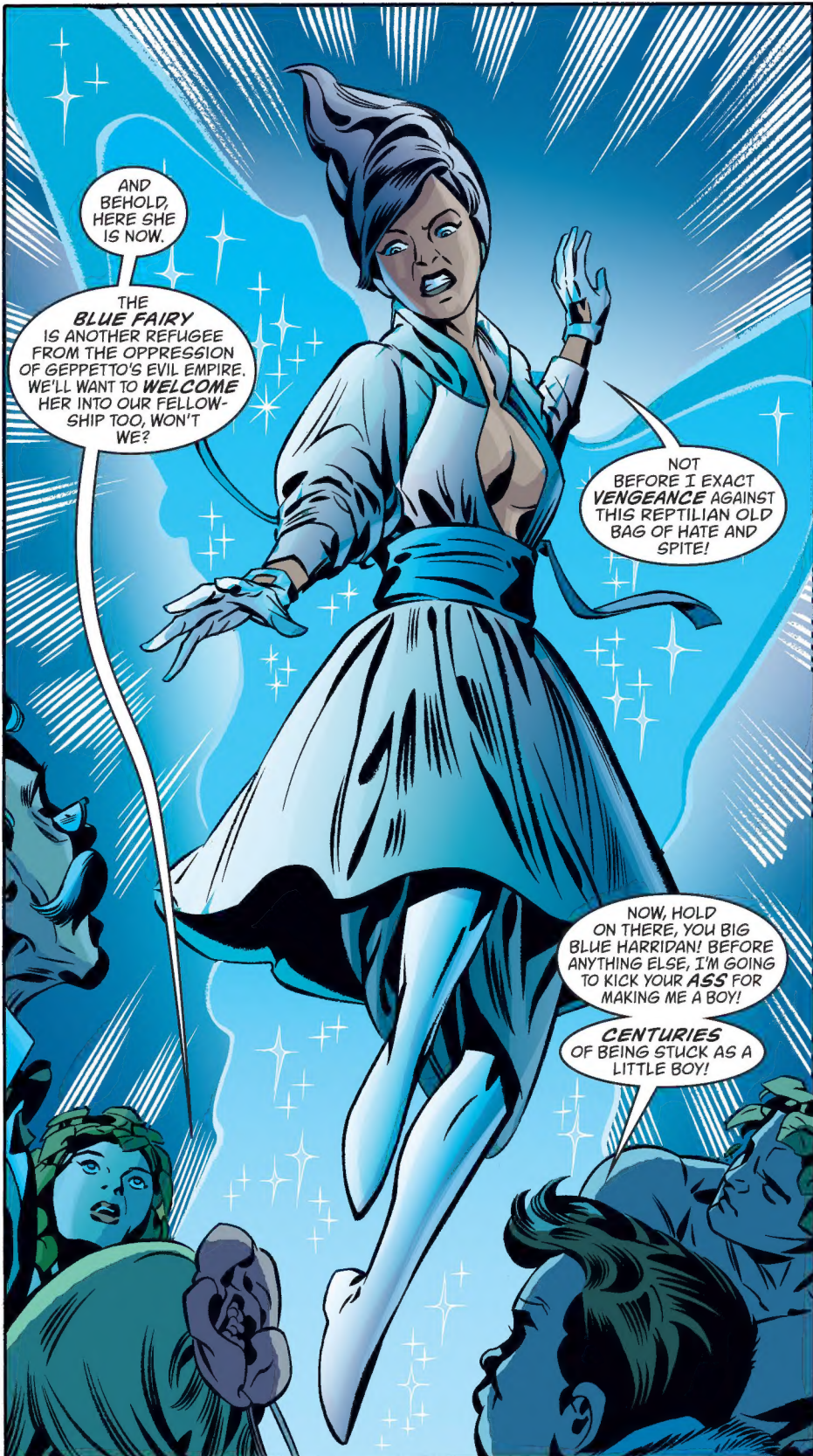
WELL, WE
DID BURN ALL
HER PARTS TO
A CRISP.



IF SHE'S SUICIDAL
ENOUGH TO COME BACK,
WE'LL JUST DEAL WITH
HER AGAIN.

BECAUSE
NO ONE THREATENS
MY PEOPLE IN MY
HOUSE!





AND
BEHOLD,
HERE SHE
IS NOW.

THE
BLUE FAIRY
IS ANOTHER REFUGEE
FROM THE OPPRESSION
OF GEPPETTO'S EVIL EMPIRE.
WE'LL WANT TO **WELCOME**
HER INTO OUR FELLOWSHIP
TOO, WON'T WE?

NOT
BEFORE I EXACT
VENGEANCE AGAINST
THIS REPTILIAN OLD
BAG OF HATE AND
SPITE!

NOW, HOLD
ON THERE, YOU BIG
BLUE HARRIDAN! BEFORE
ANYTHING ELSE, I'M GOING
TO KICK YOUR **ASS** FOR
MAKING ME A BOY!

CENTURIES
OF BEING STUCK AS A
LITTLE BOY!

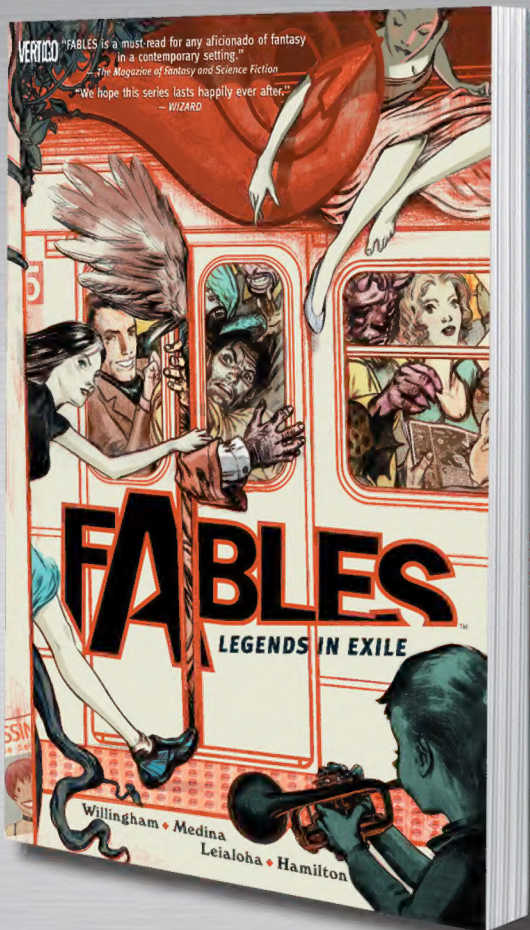
"FABLES is an excellent series in the tradition of SANDMAN, one that rewards careful attention and loyalty." – ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

BILL WILLINGHAM

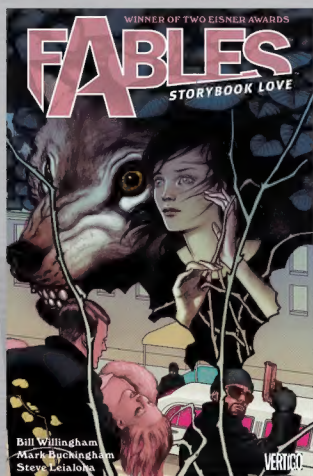
"[A] wonderfully twisted concept... features fairy tale characters banished to the noirish world of present-day New York."
– THE WASHINGTON POST



- VOL. 1: LEGENDS IN EXILE
- VOL. 2: ANIMAL FARM
- VOL. 3: STORYBOOK LOVE
- VOL. 4: MARCH OF THE WOODEN SOLDIERS
- VOL. 5: THE MEAN SEASONS
- VOL. 6: HOMELANDS
- VOL. 7: ARABIAN NIGHTS (AND DAYS)
- VOL. 8: WOLVES
- VOL. 9: SONS OF EMPIRE
- VOL. 10: THE GOOD PRINCE
- VOL. 11: WAR AND PIECES
- VOL. 12: THE DARK AGES
- VOL. 13: THE GREAT FABLES CROSSOVER
- 1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



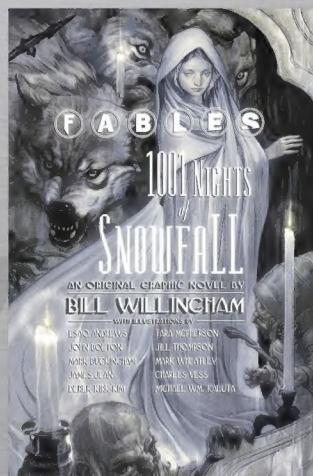
FABLES VOL. 3:
STORYBOOK LOVE



FABLES VOL. 6:
HOMELANDS

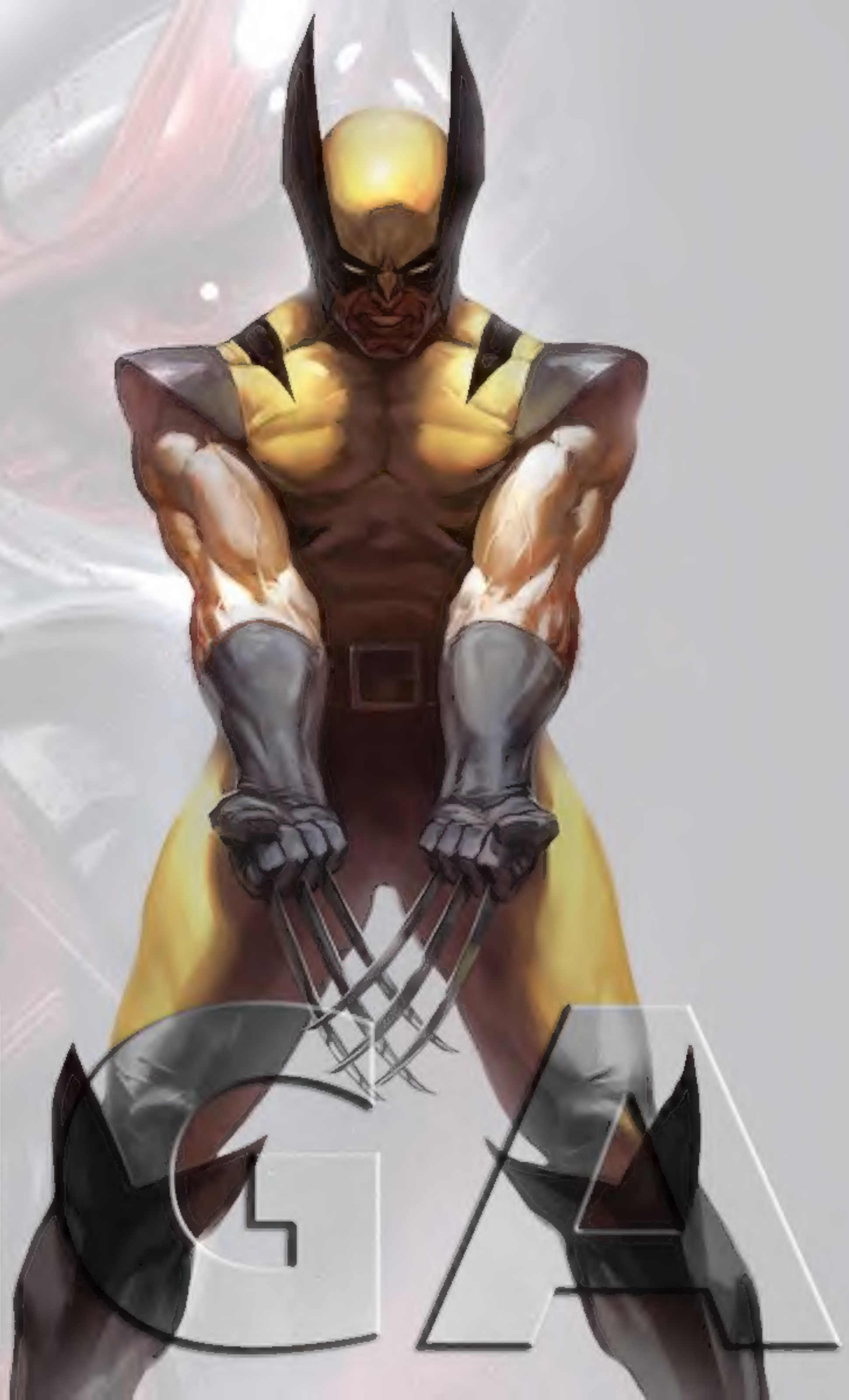


FABLES:
1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



Use the **BUY IN PRINT** feature to find a comics shop near you.
Check back here every week for **NEW DIGITAL RELEASES!**

Suggested for Mature Readers



NATHAN